

Ezra Pound, Who Does Idaho Awful Proud

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

IN *Pavannes and Divisions*, Ezra Pound's new book, the most astonishing and to us the most interesting statement is found on page 245, under the rubric *Ezra Pound Files Exceptions*. It is a letter address to Mr. William Marion Reedy. Mr. Pound says: "I was not born in Utah. . . . I was born in Idaho."

This destroys a fond illusion of ours. It explodes a theory. It destroys our Ezra Pound psychology. For the soul of Ezra Pound is Mormon, and carries within its cellular recesses no taint of monogamy or respectability.

His psyche owns up to a hundred help-mates—mainly of European origin. In the mansion of his art are many sweet-hearts. A veritable harem of literary passions. A seraglio of magnificent and veiled ideas. A secret alcove of formulas collected from as far west as Eighth avenue and as far east as old Japan.

But, Painful to Relate—

So what more natural than the theory that Ezra Pound first looked at the sky over the chimney pots of the houses of the late Joseph Smith, or that his first pranks were perpetrated around the cellar door of the Temple at Salt Lake City? But Senator Smoot claims him as a fellow statesman. It is an unesthetic blow on our solar plexus. It is as though some one had uncovered Philadelphia as the birthplace of Swinburne or Yonkers as the cradle of Arthur Symonds.

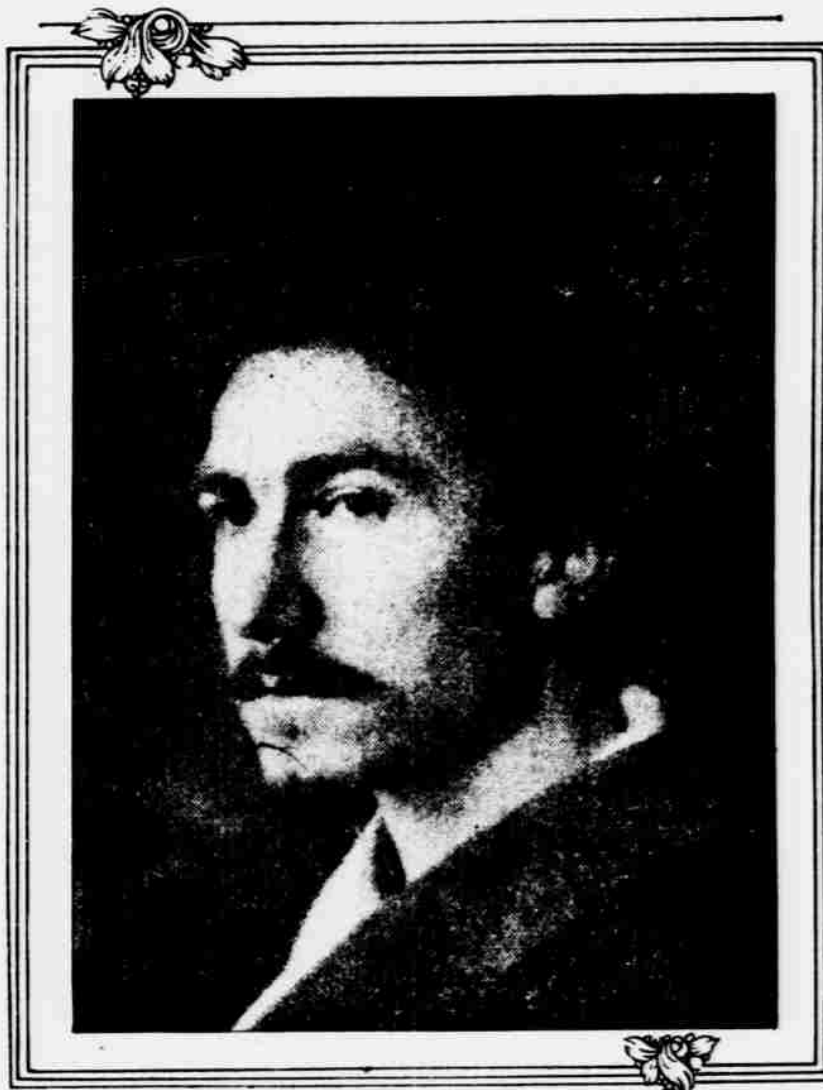
The poetical work of Ezra Pound is a musical echo of Europe. It is a carbon copy of a world that is dead—the world of the Decadence. His brain is an exquisitely attuned shell fashioned in many seas and colored by the suns of Mediterranean sands. He is what John Cowper Powys calls "Mediterranean soul."

Bourgeois? Horrors!

He is Latin to the core of his ear-drums. He is Japanese to the heart of his eye. He is an exotic superimposition, an astonishing and bizarre effect produced by education. The reality underlying his exquisitely artificial art is bourgeois and American. He is a ghost materialized by cunning effects of light and mirrors.

The total effect of his work on our cine-psycho apparatus is a picture of Francois Villon, Rabelais, Socrates, Verlaine and Sam Johnson sitting around the village pump in one of Bret Harte's towns discussing the eternal, and hence banal, subjects.

His new book, *Pavannes and Divisions*, is a cluster of satires, translations, appreciations and academic pronouncements on



EZRA POUND
Author of "Pavannes and Divisions"

Vorticists, Imagists and other neo-bores and classicists camouflaged with meaningless words.

The white elephants of literature are full upon us, and of the making of Barnums Nature hath no limit. In his essays on these new words Mr. Pound's finger is always raised toward us a la Squeers and the birch rod is always hidden under his coat, and never more so than when he is advising Les Jeune to raise hell with the other fellow's formula.

Page Signor Cellini

Where are the giants who teach us with a punch? The men without formulas or tags? The men who have something to say and say it? We need Cellinis, Goethes, Hugos, a Rabelais, a Swift and summer and winter and night classes in Walt Whitman and Nietzsche. If we are to lay the viable ghosts of Longfellow and Whittier it must be with mental TNT. Aromatic spices from France, Japan and Italy will not do the trick. They are good

dessert, but do not make a meal. Bring on the shock troops! Away with the moonbeam rookies!

L'Homme Mogen Sensuel (why all these French titles?) and *Stark Realism* are, to our way of thinking, the best things in the book. Radway, the unheroic hero in the first named satire, done in the manner of Byron's *Don Juan*, is a type of smug culture, of hypocritical donjuanism, a Pillar, a Post and a Pest, a subscriber to the *Boston Transcript* no doubt, the busy bee of questionable adventure. There is good, healthy vitriol in this poem, cleansing venom and an irony that slays—the only irony worthy the name.

Note: This Is Irony.

Here is a bit of it:
"My hero, Radway, I have named, in truth,
Some forces among those which 'formed' his youth:
These heavy weights, these dodgers and these preachers,

Crusaders, lecturers and secret leechers,
Who wrought about his 'soul' their stabs infection.

These are the highbrows, add to this collection

The social itch, the almost, all but, not quite, fascinating.

Piquante, delicious, luscious, captivating:
Puffed satin, and silk stockings, where the knee

Clings to the skirt in strict (vide *Vogue*) propriety.

Three thousand chorus girls and all un-kissed,

O state sans song, sans home grown wine, sans realist!

Tell me not in mournful wish-wash
Life's a sort of sugared dish-wash!

Radway had read the various evening papers

And yearned to imitate the Waldorf capers

As held before him in that unsullied mirror

The daily press, and monthlies nine cents dearer.

They held the very marrow of the ideals
That fed his spirit; were his mental meals."

One could row with Mr. Pound over a hundred things in this book—that is the reason it is worth reading. For instance, "Poetry is a composition of words set to music." Copy-book stuff! Poetry is Vision. Poetry is Revolt. Poetry is the hunger for Elsewhere. Poetry is a war on Reality. Poetry is the glorification of Illusion. You can no more define Poetry or put it into a formula than you can define God, Life or Beauty.

Good Stuff, Some of It.

There is a fine essay on that rarest of minds, lately dead, Remy de Gourmont. De Gourmont occupied in France the same relation to the younger literary artists of the time that James Huneker occupies at the present time in America. Young France can never pay the debt it owes to De Gourmont, just as young America can never pay the debt it owes to Huneker.

Mr. Pond in this essay almost becomes enthusiastic, nearly "loses himself." He might have forgotten his literary good breeding here for once—dropped his monocle, peeled off his spats, as it were—and waded in, his virile Idaho soul on top the psychic band wagon. De Gourmont is worth a few Rah! Rah! paragraphs.

Pavannes and Divisions is good reading if you want to know all about the New American Movement. But it is a pity that Catalina should spend so much time playing the harp. More of the Big Bass Drum, please!

PAVANNES AND DIVISIONS. By EZRA POUND. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

Posthumous Poems of Swinburne

By EDWARD N. TEALL.

WHO was the wiser—Swinburne, who for fifty years went on sweeping his desk clear of accumulated copy, wrapping it up in bundles and shelving it, or the poet's friends who have laboriously edited the literary litter? Swinburne must have had—for how can any writer be truly great who lacks it?—sufficient self-judging power to know what part of his production ought to be published; what destroyed as utterly worthless, and what laid aside for possible useful suggestiveness later on, or as a literary curiosity.

Every writer, great or small, has had the two experiences, of destroying in haste copy whose loss has afterward been regretted and of saving copy that would never have been missed if burned or turned over to the junkman. Swinburne had some perfectly good reason for treating as he did these writings which his friends are collecting. And, of course, it cannot be asserted, with proof, that his intention is not fulfilled in this collection!

The posthumously printed poems of a Rupert Brooke or an Adam Seeger might conceivably be more interesting than those of a Swinburne. The young poets, whose flights were cut off when hardly more than begun—or at least when they had only proved their power and before it had yielded its best expectable fruit—they might have left bits of verse, plans and outlines and fragmentary promises, that would have shown us more clearly than their actual relics what we had lost at the heavy hand of Kultur. Our Amer-

ican poet Sidney Lanier is as much to be prized in his bequest, compiled into *Poem Outlines*, as for his splendid finished work. But Swinburne lived long enough, one would say, to have left his work just as he wished the world to have it.

Still, if the present compilers lack other justification—and that, indeed, is not asserted or assertable—they have, in the common curiosity of the reading public, a justification which, often questioned, has as frequently been approved in the common judgment. Specialists in Swinburne poetry must have these pieces and other folks can enjoy them for their own sake.

They run from 1857 to 1907, and are here arranged in chronological order, with the exception of eleven *Border Ballads*, bulked at the front of the book—and far and away the most interesting of all its interesting contents. In a prefatory note Mr. Edmund Gosse explains with great illumination the significance of Swinburne's performance. The border ballad, the true folksong of any people, is the most difficult form of writing to imitate—because it is not properly a written thing at all. Not one person in a thousand can even read them right when genius has succeeded in transcribing them honestly.

Besides the ballads, the book includes *The Death of Sir John Franklin*, an unsuccessful Newdegate prize poem—unsuccessful, perhaps, only because of its failure to meet the requirements as to meter; *Londor at Florence*, *Sairy Gamp's Roundel*, to James McNeil Whistler, *The Cen-*

tenary of Shelley, *The Concert of Europe*, *Memorial Ode on the Death of Leconte de Lisle* (recently reprinted in this section of THE SUN), *Memorial Verses on the Death of Karl Blind*, various lyrics and fragments, the *Ode to Mazzini*, and two parodies—one on Tennyson's *Despair* and one on a chorus in Swinburne's own *By the North Sea*. It is a rich book for the friends of poetry.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. EDITED BY EDMUND GOSSE AND THOMAS JAMES WISE. John Lane Company. \$1.50.

"I do not apologize for nor am I ashamed of my German birth," says Otto H. Kahn in *Right Above Race*. "But I am ashamed—bitterly and grievously ashamed—of the Germany which stands convicted before the high tribunal of the world's public opinion of having planned and willed war; of the revolting deeds committed in Belgium and northern France, of the infamy of the Lusitania murders, of innumerable violations of the Hague convention and the law of nations, of abominable and perfidious plotting in friendly countries and shameless abuse of their hospitality, of crime heaped upon crime in hideous defiance of the laws of God and men.

"I cherish the memories of my youth, but these very memories make me cry out in pain and wrath against those who have befouled the spiritual soil of the old Germany, in which they were rooted. I re-

vere the high ideals and fine traditions of that old Germany and the time honored conceptions of right conduct which my parents and the teachers of my early youth bade me treasure throughout life, but all the more burning is my resentment, all the more deeply grounded my hostility, against the Prussian caste who trampled those ideals, traditions and conceptions in the dust."

Arnold Bennett to George H. Doran:
"80 Piccadilly, London, W. I.,

"May 13, 1918.

"My Dear Doran: I suppose you are about to publish, or have just published, *The Pretty Lady*. Here a few of the lower class papers have gone for it rather heavily as being pornographic and unsuitable for war time, &c., &c. The higher class papers, however, with the exception of the *Star* have treated it very well indeed, and I expect that next week it will have reached a sale of 20,000 copies at least. Some of the good reviews have said that it is decadent and cynical, and that it gives an entirely ruthless picture of heartless people in London. This is not so, and I particularly want you to note that the war has a good effect on the three principal characters, namely, Christine, Concepcion and G. J., all of whom do what they can. The book is emphatically not cynical. Nor does it portray heartless people, and I should like this to be insisted upon.

"I have just taken charge of British propaganda for France, so that I have rather more than I can do.

"Affectionate wishes to all of you,

"Yours ever,

"G. H. Doran, Esq.

A. B."